

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 07699 160951Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 HA-05 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 /068 W
-----094993 161005Z /20

O R 160936Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 934
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 7699

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, CH, VM
SUBJECT: CHINESE SHIPS ON WAY TO VIETNAM

REF: HONG KONG 7603

1. LOCAL PAPERS REPORTED FRIDAY MORNING THAT TWO SHIPS
LEFT CANTON AT 1800 JUNE 15, HEADING FOR HAIPHONG AND HO CHI
MINH CITY. CONFIRMATION THAT BOTH HAD LEFT THE PEARL RIVER
CHANNEL WAS RECEIVED BY EARLY AFTERNOON JUNE 16. HOWEVER,
ONE OF THEM REMAINS ANCHORED NEAR HONG KONG. SINCE IT
TAKES FIVE DAYS TO REACH HO CHI MINH CITY AND ONLY TWO TO
REACH HAIPHONG, SECOND SHIP COULD BE WAITING IN ORDER FOR
BOTH TO ARRIVE IN VIETNAM AT THE SAME TIME.

2. LIAO CH'ENG-CHIH IN SEND-OFF SPEECH IN CANTON COMMENTED
THAT THE CHINESE ACTION "IS INF ULL ACCORD WITH INTERNATIONAL
PRACTICE AND IS THE LEGITIAMATE RIGHT EXERCISED BY
THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT IN SAFEGUARDING THE INTERESTS
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OF OVERSEAS CHINESE." HE DENIED THAT THE CHINESE WERE
VIOLATING VIETNAMESE SOVEREIGNTY. LOCAL PRC-CONTROLLED
PAPERS NOTE THAT BOTH SHIPS ARE WELL-SUPPLIED WITH
FOOD AND MEDICINES, AND ARE CAPABLE OF DEFENDING
THEMSELVES.

3. COMMENT: LIAO'S STATEMENT RAISES QUSTION AS TO

WHETHER THE CHINESE WILL ATTEMPT TO ENTER VIETNAMESE
PORTS WITHOUT PRIOR CONSENT. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT
EXPECT THEM TO PROVIKE THE VIETNAMESE TO MILITARY ACTION.
MOREOVER, THERE ARE NO SIGNS OF CHINESE NAVAL SUPPORT
PREPARATIONS. AS FOR THE VIETNAMESE, WE BELIEVE THAT
THEY WILL DO EVERYTHING THEY CAN, SHORT OF COMPLETE
OSS OF FACE, TO AVOID A MILITARY CONFRONTATION.
SHOESMITH

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